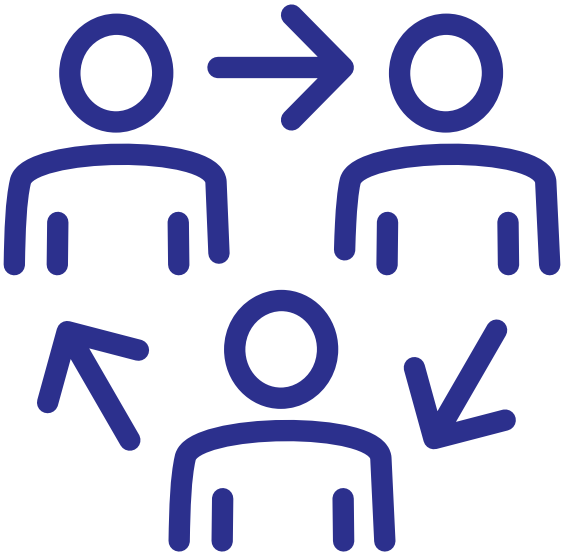
The Basics of Veteran Directed Care

An introduction to self-direction

Content created by:

ResilientSD

Part of the AssuranceSD Family



SELF-DIRECTION BASICS

For many Veterans, the idea of self-direction is exciting. Who doesn't want more power and control over their services and supports? It is important to understand what it means to self-direct and the support available to you on your journey. Self-directing your care doesn't come naturally to anyone.

The goal of this Self-Direction Guide is to provide you with the basics. It gives an overview of self-direction, the people available to support you when you choose to self-direct, and some of the rules of the road that help you to stay on course.

What you will find included:

- Understanding Self-Direction
- Principles of Self-Direction
- History of Self-Direction
- Budget and Employer Authority
- Self-Direction as a Veteran
- Community Connections
- Financial Management Services (FMS)
- Your Responsibilities with Direct Care Workers
- Fraud and Abuse
- Your Partner for Success

Understanding Self-Direction

What is Self-Direction?

Self-direction is a service model that helps people stay independent at home and in their communities. In self-direction, you decide how, when, and who provides your services and supports. It's not like traditional agency services because you get to hire your workers. The focus is on you, the program participant. You have the choice, control, and flexibility to choose supports that best fit your life. Over a million Americans currently use self-direction.

Why Choose Self Direction?

Self-direction is grounded in the belief that people with disabilities know their needs best. And are in the best position to plan and manage their services. Self-direction promotes personal choice and control over the delivery of services.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PERSON CHOOSING SELF-DIRECTION PROGRAMS

The individual choosing to self-direct has responsibilities as an employer. They are responsible for:

- Hiring
- Training (if needed)
- Scheduling
- Managing those who work for them
- Managing their budget/authorizations

Key Support Roles and Responsibilities

There are individuals and organizations that support people choosing self-directed programs. The roles and names often vary by state and program, but there are typically two key roles.

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT

Often called a Fiscal Intermediary, Fiscal Agent or Financial Management Service (FMS). The Fiscal Agent is responsible for paying the workers and vendors who are chosen by the person who is self-directing. The Fiscal Agent assists the workers and vendors in completing the necessary paperwork, issuing payments, and filing state, local, and federal taxes.

INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

Often called a Service Coordinator, Person Centered Counselor, Independent Facilitator, or Health Care Team. This person supports the individual who is self-directing. They usually assist with program eligibility and developing a flexible service budget. They also help identify providers and assist with other employer-related duties. They check in with the individual who is self-directing to ensure they are healthy and safe.

To get started, contact your local Veterans Administration Medical Center

Principles of Self-Direction

FREEDOM – to decide how to live your life.

AUTHORITY – over available resources and a specified budget. This authority can be different for each person. And can vary by program. Many programs have limited budget authority. You may need program approval to make changes.

SUPPORT – to arrange resources in ways that are important to you. The level of support relates to your outcomes, needs, and desires.

RESPONSIBILITY – for the thoughtful use of public dollars. This includes managing your approved services. And making sure you are not overspending or using more service than is approved.

ADVOCACY – of the important role that self-advocates play in the service system. It takes partnership with self-advocates to create effective change.

History of Self-Direction

Beginning in the 1990s, a few states began to offer "consumer-directed" personal care services. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation followed by awarding grants for self-direction demonstrations. The demonstrations were in 19 states and ran from 1997 to 2001. Later, the Cash and Counseling demonstration began in three states. Cash and Counseling then spread to 12 other states from 1996 to 2013.

After these projects, self-direction became an important option for providing Home and Community Based Services (HCBS). Since then, there have been several initiatives that were federally and/or privately funded. These programs have helped to improve the development of self-directed service options nationally.

The Benefits to Veterans

Provides the opportunity to customize services to meet a person's goals and support needs.

Provides choice and control over the services received. With employer authority, individuals have control over employee management. This can include everything from hiring to termination.

Provides the chance to hire family, friends, and neighbors. This often results in better, more consistent care. Provided by people with whom the individual is most comfortable.

The Benefits to Direct Care Workers

Provides options to work for individuals of their choice, such as a relative or friend who needs supports.

Creates the opportunity to develop close personal relationships with the individual they are caring for.

Provides flexible wage ranges. This often results in Direct Care Workers receiving wage rates higher than those typically paid by agency providers.

Budget and Employer Authority

There are two fundamental parts of self-directed programs. These are Budget Authority and Employer Authority. These may differ in scope depending on the specific program and funding source.

BUDGET AUTHORITY

With budget authority, you have the ability and accept the responsibility to manage your self-directed budget. The scope of the budget authority can vary by program. Under full budget authority, you may be able to make decisions about the goods and services that are approved in your service plan. You are also responsible for managing the dollars that may be included in your participant-directed budget.

In programs with a limited scope for budget authority, you may not have the flexibility to manage the dollars in your budget. However, you still have responsibility for making sure that you do not use more service than has been approved.

EMPLOYER AUTHORITY

Under employer authority, you are supported to recruit, hire, train, and manage your Direct Care Workers. You may function as the common law employer or a co-employer depending on the self-directed model.

Self-Direction as a Veteran

Veteran Directed Care (VDC) Program Overview:

- Veteran Directed Care was launched in 2008.
- Veteran Directed Care is a part of the VHA Standard Medical Benefits Package.
- The Veteran Directed Care Program is available at 71 VA Medical Centers medical centers in 37 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, with 255 Aging and Disability Networks (ADNAs) eligible to provide services.
- More than 10,000 Veterans have been served since the program began, and it continues to grow.

In VDC, an annual flexible spending budget is authorized for you. It is based on your assessed needs. Once these needs have been assessed, a person-centered counselor facilitates a person-centered process. This process supports you in planning for, arranging, and securing the needed goods and services within your budget. This ensures that your needs are met, so you can remain independent in your community.

Veterans in VDC often have access to more hours of care compared to traditional home health programs. This is because there is more flexibility with service hours, and rates can be negotiated with their Direct Care Workers.

Community Connections

Our communities are more diverse when the people in them are involved and connected. Communities need the gifts and talents of all their members. Every person has talents to share. These gifts and talents are the building blocks of healthy communities. Being connected in a community fosters belonging. It also gives people a sense of purpose.

Community Connection Offers:

- Chances to learn, work, and play alongside others.
- Life skills that lead to greater independence.
- A path forward for those who feel isolated or unwanted.
- Access to activities and services not available in segregated settings.
- The ability to improve physical health, emotional well-being, and self-confidence.

BUILDING AND GROWING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS INCLUDES:

- Identifying interests, passions, gifts, and talents
- Identifying places to share gifts and talents
- Consistently showing up at community places (restaurants, gyms, libraries, etc.)

Financial Management Services (FMS)

An FMS provider does not manage a person's personal finances or budget. Instead, they assist people who self-direct their services.

When a Veteran participates in a Veteran Directed Care Program, they hire and manage their service providers or Direct Care Workers. This is called Employer Authority. The rules that govern the programs require the money paid to Direct Care Workers to go through a third party. This third party is often called:

- Fiscal Intermediary
- Fiscal Agent
- Fiscal Employer Agent
- Financial Management Service

The FMS is a special type of payroll processor. They are responsible for paying Direct Care Workers and vendors. The FMS assists Direct Care Workers and vendors in completing the required paperwork. They also issue payments and file state, local, and federal taxes. The goal of the FMS is to help make the administrative tasks of hiring and paying Direct Care Workers and vendors easy.

Your Responsibilities with Direct Care Workers

Recruiting, Interviewing, and Selecting Staff

Before recruiting a Direct Care Worker, it is important to consider what tasks need to be performed. As well as the knowledge or skills a person needs to have. Also consider your schedule. When do you want care? Finding the right worker can take time and patience. Even when you are fully staffed, it is important to plan for unexpected situations. These may include a worker quitting or being ill. Resources and tools for recruiting are available. This includes a pool of already employed workers.

Hiring

Your FMS will work with you to complete the administrative work to get your workers hired and started. This process includes completing paperwork and submitting documentation. It also includes completing State and Federal background checks. It is important to understand the hiring process. In particular, you cannot tell your worker that they can start working until your FMS has told you that they have been approved. You may also want to develop an agreement with your worker. This would include their schedule and specific expectations you may have.

Training

Providing care is very personal to each individual. This is why training is often a task done by you. Specific training will vary based on state or VA facility. VDC providers must comply with VHA safety training. The focus is on your care preferences. This includes teaching the worker about your routines and lifestyle. You should also provide a detailed orientation of your home. Include a review of any equipment and medical devices you use.

Managing/Supervising Staff

Providing feedback to your workers about their performance is important. This feedback helps build a healthy working relationship. It can be difficult to give feedback to workers you may be close to, such as a family member or friend.Having a schedule for feedback can ease anxiety and ensure a safe place to discuss issues or concerns. Providing feedback is also a good way to make sure that workers are thanked and praised for their work. If performance issues arise, be sure to address them. Discuss the problems and agree to improvement plans. It is also good to take some notes about the conversation. You may need to refer to them later if you have continued concerns.

Termination

There will be times when you decide that the support a worker provides is no longer meeting your needs. You may choose to end a worker's employment. When doing so, it is important to communicate calmly and directly. Be clear about the issues that have arisen, and make it clear you no longer want the person to work for you. It is also important to communicate to the FMS and Health Care Team immediately about the termination/dismissal. There may be documentation that the FMS requires. The FMS may need to pay the worker their final check before the scheduled pay date to ensure compliance with employment law.

Following Employment Laws and Program Rules

It is important that you understand employment laws. You may have a friend or relative who can provide you with support with these laws. Your FMS provider can also assist. The most common issues are about wages. This includes minimum wage, limits on work hours, and overtime. The other area of importance is the Federal laws that prohibit discrimination. You cannot discriminate because of the worker's race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability. Sex includes gender identity, sexual orientation, and pregnancy status.

Fraud and Abuse

What is Fraud and Abuse?

FRAUD - An intentional deception or misrepresentation. The goal is to take money from the Veteran Directed Care (VDC) Program. It is important to remember that fraud is an intentional act.

ABUSE - Actions by providers, Direct Care Workers, or vendors that do not align with accepted standards and result in unnecessary costs to the program, whether directly or indirectly.

The most common types of fraud and abuse

BILLING FOR SERVICES THAT WERE NOT PROVIDED

Example: When a person may be scheduled to receive a service but is unable to attend. Then the provider bills for the service even though the person did not receive it.

BILLING FOR HOURS/TIME NOT WORKED

Example: This can occur when a Direct Care Worker is scheduled and does not show up for the shift. Then the worker puts those hours on their timesheet. Showing that they worked the scheduled shift.

SERVICES PROVIDED DURING INSTITUTIONAL STAYS

Example: Most of the time, long-term care services cannot be billed when a person is in an institutional setting. These settings include hospitals or nursing homes. Direct Care Workers cannot be paid for care they may provide in an institutional setting.

FALSIFYING SIGNATURES AND/OR HOURS ON A TIMESHEET OR INVOICE

This can occur in several ways:

- If a Direct Care Worker fills out a timesheet or invoice. Signs the timesheet and also signs for the Veteran for whom they provide care.
- If the Veteran signs a blank timesheet and has the worker complete it without review.
- If the Direct Care Worker submits their time to the Veteran for whom they provide care. Then, after the Veteran signs the timesheet/invoice. The Direct Care Worker adds hours to the timesheet/invoice.
- If the Veteran terminates a Direct Care Worker and does not inform the FEA. And then the worker continues to submit hours and signs for both parties.

DOUBLE BILLING

Example: This most often occurs when a Direct Care Worker submits hours for the same time and day, for two different Veterans who do not live in the same location. Or if two staff submit hours for the same service when they are not approved to do so.

KICKBACKS

There are two primary situations that can occur:

- A Veteran hires a Direct Care Worker and asks the worker to give them a percentage or amount from their check.
- A provider/vendor agrees to provide services with the promise that the Veteran will receive a portion of the provider/vendors' reimbursement.

Your Partner for Success

Our role at ResilientSD is to support Veterans in directing and managing their services.

Our goal is to help Veterans remain in their homes and thriving in their communities. The company is guided by its mission: “To support our neighbors who are aging or have disabilities to live their best lives by self-directing when, where, and how they receive their supports and services.” This mission is personal to our team and is woven into every aspect of our work.

We are a national company working with local providers.

Email: info@Resilient-SD.com

Web: Resilient-SD.com

ResilientSD

Part of the AssuranceSD Family

ResilientSD.com